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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

NSA review completed

ARMY review(s) completed.

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3 January 1967

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Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001500010061-2

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001500010061-2

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HIGHLIGHTS

Fourteen additional North Korean pilots were identified by voice intercepts in familiarization flight activity over North Vietnam on 2 January. This brings the number of Korean pilots identified to date to 35.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US Marines have been hampered by poor weather in their attempt to locate a 1,000-man enemy force reported near their positions in northern Thua Thien Province (Para. 1). A total of 15 enemy soldiers were killed early on 3 January during a 20-minute fight in coastal Binh Dinh Province (Para. 2). Operation PAUL REVERE IV has ended in the border provinces of Pleiku and Kontum, and has been followed by Operation PAUL REVERE V (Para. 3). A Soviet contact-type mine was discovered in a Saigon - South China Sea shipping channel on 31 December (Para. 4).

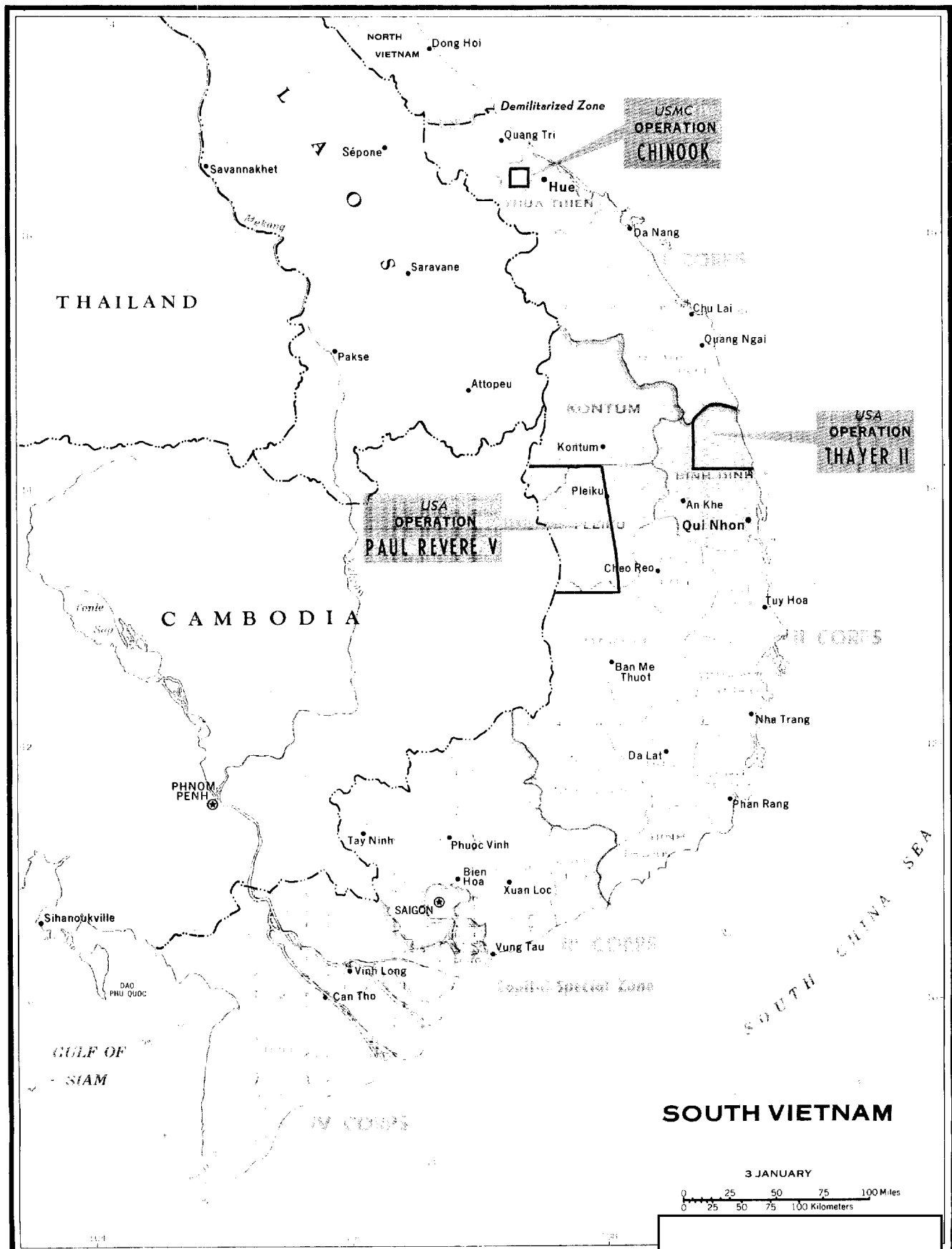
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
Thirty-five North Korean pilots have now been identified in North Vietnam (Para. 1). At least 12 North Korean pilots were airborne during the major air battle near Hanoi on 2 January (Paras. 2-4).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi continues to take advantage of international gatherings to publicize Vietnamese Communist views (Paras. 1-2).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Soviet shipping to North Vietnam in December exceeded the average for the three previous months and the higher volume will continue in January (Paras. 1-2).



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US Marines participating in search-and-destroy Operation CHINOOK in northern Thua Thien Province have been hampered by poor weather in their search for an estimated 1,000-man Communist force which attempted to infiltrate US positions on 31 December during the cease-fire. Two marine battalions dispatched on 1 January to search for the enemy force have reported only two minor contacts. Heavy cloud cover and rain have limited air reconnaissance and nearly two feet of water has restricted US movement.

2. Fifteen enemy soldiers were reported killed during a 20-minute fight between a company of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division and a Communist force of undetermined size 42 miles northwest of Qui Nhon in coastal Binh Dinh Province early on 3 January. No American casualties were reported. The US troops are part of Operation THAYER II, a five-battalion search-and-destroy operation which has killed more than 1,000 enemy soldiers since its inception on 24 October.

3. Operation PAUL REVERE IV, which was conducted by seven US infantry battalions in western Pleiku and Kontum provinces, ended on 31 December. This reconnaissance-and-surveillance operation, which began on 17 October, resulted in Communist losses of 977 killed, 90 captured, and more than 300 weapons seized. American losses were 136 killed and 466 wounded. The next phase of this long-term operation--Operation PAUL REVERE V--has begun in the same general area.

Soviet Contact Mine Discovered in Saigon Shipping Channel

4. A Soviet contact mine was discovered in a main shipping channel between Saigon and the sea by a US minesweeper on 31 December. The mine contained 506 pounds of TNT, was 34 inches in diameter, and 52 inches long. This is the first discovery of

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a Soviet mine in the area southwest of Saigon and is also the first known use of a contact type mine in Vietnamese waters. MACV comments that the availability of this type of mine to the Viet Cong in any significant quantity would represent an increased threat to shipping in this area.

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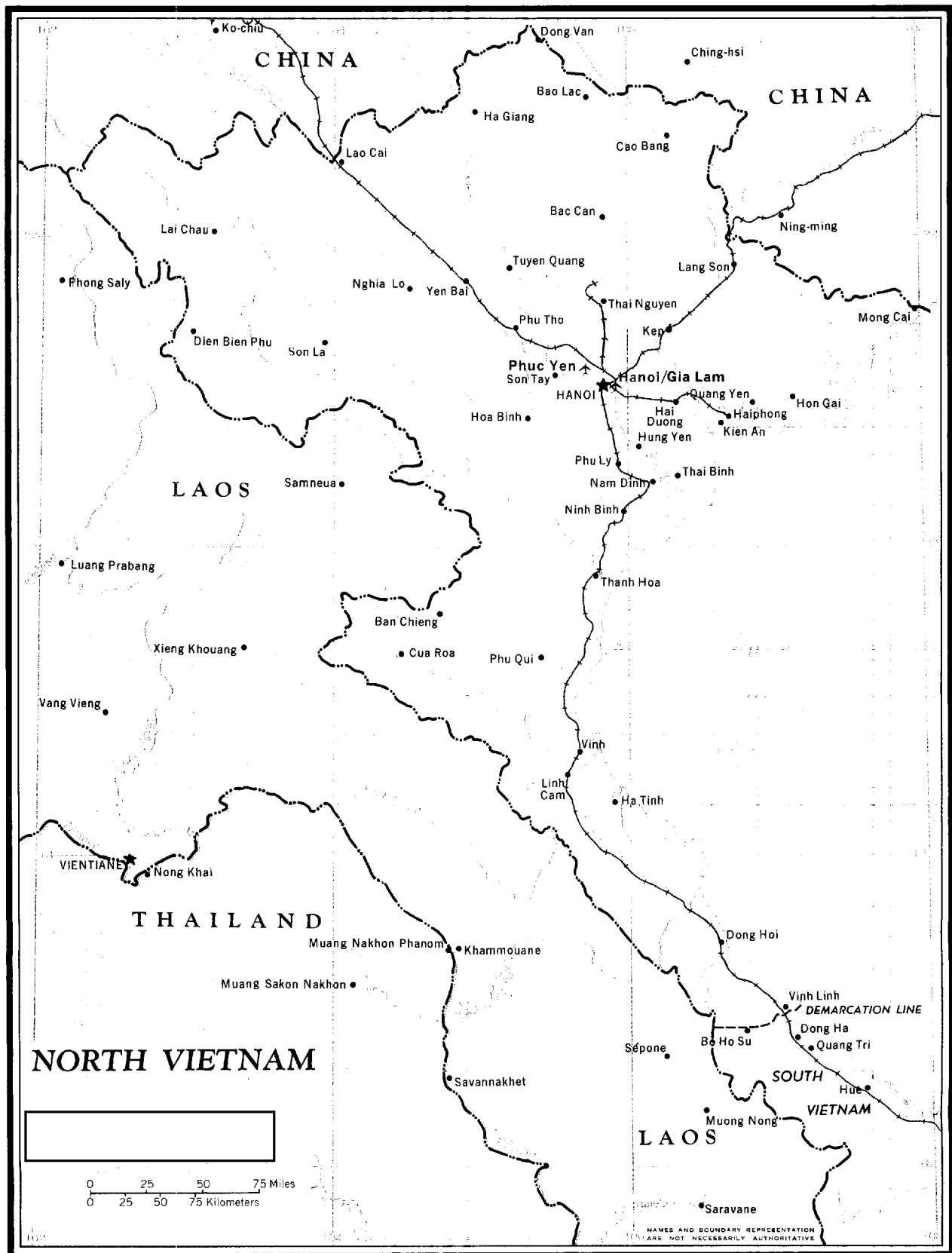
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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. A preliminary field report based on intercepted tactical voice communications indicates that a minimum of 14 North Korean pilots not previously noted in the DRV flew area familiarization flights from Phuc Yen Airfield on 2 January. The same sort of flight activity was performed by the earlier contingent of 21 Korean aviators first noted in the DRV on 22 November 1966. If the SIGINT report of additional North Korean Air Force flight personnel in North Vietnam is correct, it adds weight to the assumption that the Koreans will assume a combat rather than a training role in the DRV air defense system. A group of 35 pilots would be extremely large for a contingent of instructors.

2. At least 12 North Korean pilots were airborne in MIG-17 aircraft during the major air battle near Hanoi on 2 January, according to SIGINT reports. The Korean aviators made no attempt to engage US planes and apparently were assigned to a defensive patrol of Phuc Yen Airfield. Four Korean pilots were noted performing the same mission on 26 December while DRV fighters attempted to shoot down a US reconnaissance drone. It is possible that the Koreans may have assumed an airfield defense function as part of their role in North Vietnam, thus freeing more DRV pilots for combat with US aircraft.

3. The destruction of seven MIG-21s on 2 January has reduced North Vietnam's inventory of the advanced Soviet-built interceptors to eight aircraft. US pilot reports indicate that the DRV Air Force committed 14 of the 15 MIG-21s known to have been in North Vietnam. Twelve USAF F4Cs were involved in the 14-minute encounter with the MIG-21s. Air-to-air missiles were responsible for all of the DRV losses. The American pilots noted that the Communist fighters fired guns and rockets, but no missiles were sighted.

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4. At least 11 probable MIG-17s took off from Hanoi's Gia Lam Airfield during the 2 January engagement according to communications intercepts, but they were ordered by their ground controller to remain at low altitude. At one point during the battle, the MIG-17s, which were consuming fuel rapidly because of their low altitude, were temporarily prevented from returning to the Gia Lam Air Base as a MIG-21 made an emergency landing with only 100 litres of fuel remaining.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Hanoi continues to take advantage of international gatherings in free world countries to publicize Vietnamese Communist views. As the new year begins, two delegations have already been dispatched, one to Damascus for a trade union conference, and one to Paris to attend the 18th Congress of the French Communist Party. The delegation to Damascus is led by Le Van, a trade union official. The French Communist Party Congress is being attended by two important Vietnamese Communist Party central committee men, Nguyen Van Tran and Ha Huy Giap.

2. The Liberation Front is also sending delegates to the French Communist Party meetings--Dang Quang Minh from its Moscow office and Duong Dinh Thao from its Berlin office.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Soviet shipping to North Vietnam picked up in December after a decline in average monthly deliveries from September through November. This increase may reflect deliveries under the new aid agreements concluded with the USSR in September. Twelve Soviet ships--eight freighters and four tankers--delivered about 48,500 tons of cargo in December, equaling the monthly average for the first nine months of 1966. Seaborne deliveries of POL accounted for about half the cargo delivered. The Soviet tanker Rovno, operating out of the Black Sea, arrived in Haiphong with about 10,900 tons of POL. In addition, three smaller tankers operating out of Vladivostok delivered about 12,000 tons of POL.

2. The higher volume of Soviet shipping will continue in January.

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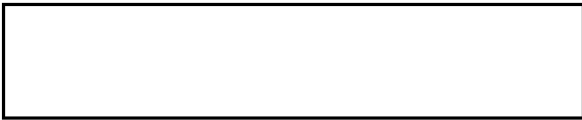
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